

Peter George (businessman)

Peter Michael George (October 3, 1943 – January 4, 2007) was a British businessman who served from 1994 to 2000 as chairman and chief executive of Hilton Group PLC, the British company that operates non-US Hilton hotel locations and Ladbrokes betting shops.^[1]

Career

Peter George was educated at the City of London Freeman's School.^[1]

George's 37-year career with Hilton Group PLC started in 1963 when he joined Ladbroke Racing. He became managing director in 1976^[1] and joined the Ladbroke Board in 1980. He was appointed vice chairman and joint managing director in 1990 with operating responsibilities for the group's hotels, racing and retail divisions. Eventually, following the merger between Ladbrokes plc and Hilton Group plc, George served as group chief executive of Hilton Group plc. In that role, he was instrumental in working with Steve Bollenbach in creating the strategic alliance in 1997 between Hilton Hotels Corporation and Hilton International (the lodging subsidiary of Hilton Group.) This alliance ultimately paved the way for the 2006 acquisition of Hilton International by Hilton Hotels Corporation.^[1]

In 1994, when John Jackson was named chairman of Hilton Group Plc and Peter George as CEO, strategic reviews were conducted and Ladbrokes reentered the casino business with the purchase of three London casinos. Later, in 1997, Hilton International and Hilton Hotels Corporation enter into a worldwide marketing alliance^[2] and Ladbrokes' property division is shut down. In 1998, government regulators ruled Ladbrokes' ambitious purchase of the Coral chain at George's direction anticompetitive and Ladbrokes was forced to sell.^[3]

George stepped down as CEO in May of 2000 in order to spend more time with his family and spend more time in the United States. His position was filled by David Michels, and he moved to Los Angeles to live with his wife Kay.^[4] In the US, he continued to serve in existing positions as a nonexecutive director on the board of US Airways Group Inc and as nonexecutive director of Hilton Hotels Corp in Beverly Hills.^[5] He joined Park Place Entertainment as the Head of International



A professional photograph of Peter George.



HRH Prince Charles cuts the ribbon on the Sandton Hilton with Peter George to his left.

Development. Park Place later acquired Caesars Worldwide and changed its name to Caesars Entertainment. The company was bought in 2005 by Harrah's Entertainment, and George worked there until his death in 2007.^[4]

Personal life

George was born on October 3, 1943 to a bookmaker in Dorking, Surrey.^[4] According to Cyril Stein, who first bought Ladbrokes in 1956 then floated it in 1967,^[6] said "Peter was a bookmaker's son but he didn't get on with his father and wrote to me for a job. He started working on the field book in the credit office, but he was good with figures and we put him on the rails alongside Dickie Gaskell, though it wasn't long before he took over his own pitch."^[4] Stein added that "Peter had a warm personality and everybody liked him. As a businessman he was very calm, and he made it his job to get to know what was going on in the world of betting, which is why Ladbrokes became a leader in technology. Peter's strength was in betting. He came from that background, and that was always his big interest."^[4] John Jarvis, former chairman, president and chief executive officer of Ladbroke said that he "had tremendous admiration for Peter's energy, talent and knowledge of betting. He was a man of true integrity in an industry where there are some pretty mixed characters."^[4]



Peter George seen shaking hands with HRH Prince Charles at a fundraising polo event.

George ended his first marriage, blaming the divorce on "overwork".^[7] Shortly after, he married Kay, an American woman. He has one daughter who he had with his first wife, Carol.^[1]

He died of lung cancer on January 4th, 2007 at the age of 63.^[8]

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